

CHAPTER IV  
THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL  
ORGANISATION OF THE  
TRADITIONAL VILLAGE

I

Land and Crops:

The total area of land of the village Haria in 1901 was 911.07 acres or about 1.4 square miles. Of these 911 acres, 156 acres were under roads, ponds and the village site and 31 acres under pasture; 49 acres constituted uncultivable land and the remaining area, viz. 675 acres, consisted of cultivable land holdings.

From the point of view of the ownership of village lands it may be stated here that the village Anavils were the virtual owners of the cultivable land in the village. As against this the other village castes owned a negligible proportion of land in the village. Land distribution among different castes in Haria in 1901 is

shown in Table No.3.

TABLE III\*

Distribution of Land among different Castes of Haria in 1901

No.	Name of Caste	Landowned (in acres)	Percentage
1.	ANAVILS	612.29	90.4
2.	DHEDS	18.19	3.0
3.	BRAHMAN (Priest)	1.00	0.2
4.	DUBLA	0.21	0.1
5.	MOCHI	0.07	0.1
6.	MONEY-LENDERS (Outsiders)	42.04	6.2
Total:		675.00	100.0

\*Note: This table is based on the earliest record of land ownership and the amount of land revenue collected from different owners of land in Haria. This record is named as botkhat and is dated 1901. It was available at the Taluka Record Office of Bulsar.

It will be seen from this Table that the Anavils owned as much as ninety per cent of cultivable land in the village. On the other hand, the Dheds, Brahmans,

Dublas and Mochis together owned a little over three percent of that land. The rest of that land was owned by money lenders. The Landownership Register, named as botkhat, from which this information has been gathered, mentions the names of four Parsi money lenders of Pardi. The Haria Anavils often borrowed money from them by mortgaging their lands. Hence the names of the money lenders in the Landownership Register. While the Dheds owned land in lieu of their services to the State as Vethiyas (village peons), the shoe-maker and the Brahman owned land for serving the village community. How a Dubla came to own land in the village is not known.

From the point of view of cultivation the cultivable village land was divided into three divisions, viz. bagayat (garden land), kyari (wet-crop land or rice land) and jarayat (dry-crop land). They are arranged in order of their fertility; that is, garden land was superior to wet-crop land and the wet-crop land was superior to dry-crop land. While two or even three crops were raised on the garden and wet-crop land, the dry-crop land was hardly brought under

cultivation for growing food crops. Table No.4 given below shows that about 261 acres (or 36.6 percent) constituted garden land, about 42 acres (or 6.2 percent) wet-crop land and about 373 acres (or 55.2 percent) dry-crop land.

A rich variety of crops were grown on the garden land. Some of them were sugar cane, tur pluses (cajanus indicus), vegetables such as suran (amorphophalus) and tamatoes, spices such as ginger and turmeric, til (gingelly), coarse type of millets e.g.

Table IV

TABLE IV\*

Land Distribution under different Crops in Haria in 1901

Under crop or in some other use	Area of land	Percentage of the - total cul- tivable land	Percen- tage of the - total village land
Bagayat land crops	260.31	38.6	-
Wet land crops	42.05	06.2	-
Dry-land crops	373.04	55.2	
Total land under cultivation	675.00	100.0	74.2
Uncultivable	49.00	..	05.4
Village pasture	31.07	..	03.4
Under roads, village ponds and village site	156.00	..	17.1
Total:	911.07	..	100.0

\*Note: This table is also based upon the information collected from botkhat

nagali (eleusine coracana), sanno (hemp), fruits e.g. bananas and divela (castor seeds). These crops were grown in such a way that the land hardly remained

uncultivated during the year. One crop followed the other in rotation. A chart showing rotation of crops on the garden and wet crop lands in Haria is given below.

#### CHART II

##### Rotation of Crops on Garden and Wet-Crop land in Haria

Year	Garden Land (Crops)	Wet-crop Land (Crops)
1st Year	Tur and sugarcane	Paddy and val
2nd Year	Tur, til, ginger, turmeric, suran, bananas, tamatoes and divela	Paddy and val
3rd Year	Nagali and sann	Paddy and val
4th Year	Tur and sugarcane	Paddy and val

Two or even three crops were raised on the garden and wet-crop land. The main factors which helped raising two-to-three crops in the same field during a year were (a) land was rich in fertility, (b) there was ample and regular rain during monsoon (between 45" and 65") and

(a) the village cultivators could irrigate their fields during off-season period through privately owned wells.

Rotation of crops was done with a view of avoid exhaustion of the soil. Different and mixed crops were grown on the same piece of land one after another from year to year. It will be seen from Chart No.2 that nagali and sann were followed by tur pluses and sugarcane. Nagali was a monsoon crop and sann a winter crop. Sann preceded the cultivation of sugarcane because the former acted as a fertilizer when dried and burnt in the fields just before the cultivation of sugarcane. A mixed crop of tur pluses and sugarcane was possible because the latter was a thirteen-month crop. Tur could be harvested within a period of five to six months and till that time sugarcane plants were quite young. After the harvest of both tur and sugarcane was taken the remains of plants were dried and burnt in the fields and this added to the fertility of the soil. In the following years a number of different crops were raised in those fields. However, there was no regular cultivation of divela, but divela seeds were sown on the boundaries of these fields, so that along with other crops divela

plants also grew up, without special attention. These crops were followed by nagali and sann, after which again it was the turn of tur and sugarcane. Thus every fourth year sugarcane was cultivated on the garden land. Some cultivators, however, did not strictly follow this pattern of cultivation. The interval between two sugarcane crops was sometimes extended from three to five or even six years.

With regard to the wet crop land, two crops were grown in rotation, one after another. They were paddy and val pulses. Paddy was a kharif or monsoon crop and val pulses was a Rabi or winter crop.

Generally, the dry-crop land was not brought under cultivation of food crops. A part of it was reserved as a pasture where the cattle grazed; on other part of it grass was allowed to grow freely which was cut, dried and preserved as fodder; and on the rest of it wildly grew babul trees which were a source of firewood. A few cultivators, however, raised kodra a type of coarse grain, on parts of this land at long intervals.

The important point to be noted about various



agricultural activities in Haria was that the village cultivators remained more or less engaged in a round-the-year agricultural schedule. At times simultaneous attention had to be paid to different activities on the garden, wet-crop and dry-crop land. The agricultural calender given below in Chart No. 3 clearly shows that while on the garden land there was continuous work to be done throughout the year, on the wet-crop and dry-crop land there was work only during seasons. However, the pressure of work remained more during the months June-July, September-October-November and February-March-April.

Chart III

# CHART III\*

## Past Agricultural Calendar

Month	AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES		
	On Garden Land	On Wet-crop Land	On Dry-Crop Land
May	Fencing, Ploughing, Manuring, Chas-preparing and Levelling	Ploughing, Manuring, embankments and Levelling	Clearing and Ploughing fields for Kodra cultivation
June	Sowing: Sugarcane and tur	Sowing: Paddy	Sowing: Kodra
July	Weeding	Transplanting	...
August	Weeding	Weeding	Weeding
September	Weeding	Harvesting Kada Paddy and Winowing	Harvesting Kodra
October	Irrigating Sugarcane fields	Harvesting Kolam Paddy and Winowing	Grass-cutting
November	Irrigating sugarcane fields	Ploughing fields and sowing val	...
December	Tur-harvesting and Irrigating sugarcane fields	...	...
January	Tur-harvesting and Irrigating sugarcane fields	...	...
February	Irrigating sugarcane fields	Val-harvesting	...
March	Irrigating sugarcane fields	Val-harvesting	...
April	Sugarcane-harvesting and gul preparing	...	...
May	Sugarcane -harvesting and gul preparing	...	Felling Baval trees

\*Note: This Chart includes activities only of some major crops cultivated in Haria:

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The crops of sugarcane, tur, suran, paddy, val and bananas involved very minute agricultural operations. Sugarcane was a thirteen-month crop. Except for monsoon, it required regular irrigation till its harvest. Almost all cultivators owned a well (in or near their sugarcane fields), a pair of oxen and a kos ( a big leather jar) or Persian wheel. With these facilities they could irrigate their sugarcane fields as long as they required. Then, along with the harvest of sugarcane, gul manufacturing activities also began. Juice was extracted from sugarcane by means of kolu (a country wooden machine run with the help of a pair of oxen); and gul was manufactured by boiling the juice in big iron pans till it becomes thick. Gul was then packed in earthen pots for sale.

Similarly, in the case of the other main crops, the cultivators remained very busy all throughout the year. One of the elderly village informants put it thus: "one who missed a moment (during the season) lost the year". It was the problem of performing agricultural operations at particular moments. This was especially true with sowing, transplanting and harvesting operations

of different crops. Crops got easily spoilt if those operations were delayed.

Thus this type of crop-pattern involved steady work throughout the year. The cultivators could not cope up with heavy agricultural work single-handed. It was quite essential for them to maintain a permanent labour force. This was ensured through the Hali system which was widely prevalent in the whole of South Gujarat.

## II

### Hali System:

Every Anavil family in Haria maintained one or more families of Dublas or Naikas as halis and the services of the entire hali family were at the disposal of the dhaniyamo. This sort of dhaniyamo-hali relationship was prevalent in the whole of South Gujarat before the beginning of the present century. With the beginning of the present century, the Hali system came under the influence of some economic and political changes in

South Gujarat. Here I present a picture of the Hali system prevalent in Haria before it was affected by recent changes.

The usual account of the dhaniyamo-hali relationship started with the necessity for a Dubla youth to finance his wedding. He approached one of the landlords of his village for a loan. The landlord, who was in need of a permanent labourer, granted the loan to the Dubla youth. In return, the latter agreed to serve the former until the debt was repaid. In this way the Dubla Youth became the hali of that landlord. As the hali was, however, unable to repay his debt, he served his dhaniyamo throughout his life. The hali's wife (called harekwali) and his son (called govalio) also almost invariably, served the hali's dhaniyamo as a maid servant and cowherd respectively. When the hali's son reached marriageable age, he approached his father's dhaniyamo for a loan. Generally, the dhaniyamo gave him the loan mainly on two considerations; (1) that the Dubla Youth had served him as his cowherd so far; and (2) that he needed a new hali to replace the present hali when the latter retired. Thus, with the receipt of a loan the

Dubla youth followed the footsteps of his father and tied up his family also with his father's dhaniyamo. It was in this way that the male descendants of the hali's family and those of the dhaniyamo's family maintained the same type of dhaniyamo-hali relationship for several generations without a break. The hali's son, however, could approach another landlord of the village if the dhaniyamo of his father was not in need of one more hali. In that case, he became the hali of the other landlord who offered him the necessary loan to finance his wedding. But there too, being a hali, he worked as a permanent labourer under that dhaniyamo. In this way the labourers of not only village Haria, but of the whole region of South Gujarat worked throughout their life as halis under Anavil or other dhaniyamos. The Gezetter (Vol. II) has made a detailed note of Hali system. It has been mentioned that in the central plain region of South Gujarat some big Anavil landlords employed as many as 400 halis.

The Nature and hours of  
work of the Hali:

The hali lived with his family in a hut generally built on his dhaniyamo's land and worked usually on the

latter's fields. Besides agricultural work, the hali, at times, was required to work elsewhere as desired by his dhaniyamo. The hali drove his dhaniyamo's cart to a nearby village or a town; he escorted the latter's daughter to her affinal home; and occasionally he helped the latter's womenflok in domestic work.

Normally the hali worked from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a break of one-to-two hours for lunch at noon time (e.g. from 12 noon to 2-00 p.m.) But during the peak seasons, that is, at the time of planting sugar-cane, sowing, transplanting and harvesting paddy and grass-cutting, the hali started working as early as 5 a.m. and continued working till 7 p.m. with the usual break of two hours at the noontime. As the hali's hut was at a stone's throw from his dhaniyamo's house, he was called if necessary, even during the night.

The hali's wife, the harekwali, who worked as a maid servant in her husband's dhaniyamo's house, daily performed such duties as sweeping the floor of the house; cleaning the cattle-shed and carrying the dung to the dungheap; fetching water for household purposes; cleansing the household utensils; and, occasionally, grinding the grain. She also did such additional work as was called upon to do on special occasions like wedding in the dhaniyamo's family. Her usual hours of

work were from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The hali's son, the govalio, usually took the dhaniyamo's cattle out every morning to graze on the village pasture or to the dhaniyamo's private vada land. He went out at 8 a.m. and returned at 5 p.m. He was also a sort of an apprentice to whom the dhaniyamo occasionally entrusted some light work either in the home or on the field.

Rates of Wages:

There was, however, no uniformity in the payment of wages to the halis. Barring certain minor differences the hali, the harekwali and the govalio generally received their wages from their dhaniyamoes mostly in a fixed amount of grain allowances and a little cash on a few occasions. During the peak seasons, when hali was required to remain on the fields for the whole day, the dhaniyamo provided two meals a day to the hali, which included (i) breakfast of one loaf of nagali and a small quality of kathol<sup>1</sup>; and (ii) lunch of cooked rice, dal<sup>2</sup>

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1 It is a substitute for green vegetables. It is prepared from certain pulses, here, usually from val.

2 Cooked liquid pulses.



and papad or a small quantity of pickles. During the rest of the year the hali got his daily wages consisting of (i) breakfast as mentioned above and (ii) grain allowances locally called as bhatu which included either from athavalas <sup>3</sup> of paddy or two athavalas of nagali whichever the hali chose. Over and above these daily grain allowances or meals, the hali also received some quantity of tobacco enough for a day's smoke. In addition to these daily receipts the hali got his annual requirements of clothes and footwares, viz. a pair of pichhodis (dhoti), a pair of dagalo (waistcoat) and a pair of shoes. Moreover, the dhaniyamo used to give a gift of a few coins on the occasion of some festivals such as divaso, holi and divali. This gift was named as pivainu, that is, the gift was meant for enjoying a drink of toddy.

The harekwali received as her daily wages one dishful of meals at noontime which she usually carried to her home. It included cooked rice, dal, a loaf of

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<sup>3</sup> This is a local measure. It is made up of hollow - bamboo and contains about 1.25 lbs of grains.

nagali and papad or pickles. Moreover, she was paid from Rs./8/- to Re. 1/- per month depending upon the size of the dhaniyamo's family, and a pair of garments e.g. a sari and a blouse annually. During the season of transplanting and harvesting of paddy and grass cutting, she worked a veliya (lit. part time labourer) on the field of her dhaniyamo and received half the amount of grain allowances given to the hali.

The govalio was given one loaf of nagali and a small quantity of kathol twice a day and one rupee per month. Some landlords, however, gave him secondhand garments also. But this was out of their kindness towards the hali's son and not a part of the conventional wages of the govalio.

Apart from these regular payments the dhaniyamo also spent for medicines, etc. in the event of sickness of a member of his hali's family. But this was very rare. Moreover, the dhaniyamo not only allowed his hali to build his hut on the former's land, but also provided free of charge some building materials including dabhadu (straw), wood and cowdung.

Thus the dhaniyamo practically maintained the whole of his hali's family in return of the latter's services to him. In this sense it can be said to be a relationship that existed between the two families of the dhaniyamo and the hali rather than simply the relationship between the dhaniyamo as the master landlord and the hali as his permanent labourer. This sort of inter-familial relationship was unique in itself.

The hali gained a particular status in his dhaniyamo's family. The dhaniyamo's children paid due respect to the elderly hali by addressing the latter as *Magalakaka* (lit. uncle Mangala). On the other hand, the hali addressed his dhaniyamo in singular which is considered to be a mark of closeness and affection between two persons. The hali could freely move in his dhaniyamo's house except the kitchen which shows that full trust was laid upon him by the latter. The hali was invariably consulted by his dhaniyamo in important agricultural matters. The hali also worked with full vigour and enthusiasm on his dhaniyamo's field, least the crops should fail. The dhaniyamo on his part, recognised the selfless services

of his hali by not only looking after him when he was ill but also maintaining him during his oldage. It was not that the hali was respected in his dhaniyamo's house alone; he was equally respected by his dhaniyamo's vevāi (son's or daughter's father-in-law). Similarly, his dhaniyamo duly respected his vevai's hali. To illustrate, when the hali of Mr. X of village P escorted Mr. X's daughter to her affinal home in village Q, the vevai of Mr. X entertained him with sweet dishes (e.g. kansar, dal, cooked rice and vegetables or pickles); and so did Mr. X. When his vevai's hali visited his place on such an occasion. There were some other occasions also when the dhaniyamoes treated their vevai's halis with due respects such as when Mr. X's hali led a gheraiya dance group to Mr. X's vevai's place for the first time after Mr. X's daughter's wedding or after Mr. X's daughter delivered a son.

These and various ~~other~~<sup>other</sup> instances are sufficient to show that ordinarily the relations between the dhaniyamoes and their halis continued to be harmonious. The dhaniyamo-hali relationship was, therefore, a perpetuation not merely of economic relationship but essentially

of inter-familial relationship. Of course, there were some variations as regards the rates and nature of payments of wages to the halis in different parts of South Gujarat. But the general pattern of dhaniyamo-hali relationship remained the same. It may also be pointed out here that there would have been some instances when a hali changed his dhaniyamo after some period of their 'contract'. Shukla has made a note of this possibility in his survey of a South Gujarat Taluka.<sup>4</sup> But as he has noted, this was possible only if the other dhaniyamo was prepared to pay off the debt of the hali to the latter's original dhaniyamo. Such cases were few and far between. However, the hali remained a hali so long as he was bound to under a dhaniyamo. He could not become free from his bondage; and with him was tied the entire hali-family to a dhaniyamo's family.

Nevertheless, this Hali system was the back-bone of the rural economy of South Gujarat. It ensured both a continuous flow of labour supply to the landowners and a security of work and wages to the labourers. To

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4 Shukla J.B. Life and Labour in a South Gujarat Taluka, (1937, Ch. V), p.116

call the hali a 'serf' or a 'slave' is an exaggerated view of the whole picture.<sup>5</sup> No doubt, the halis were paid below what may be called as standard level of wages. But it is not true to say that the hali was treated as a slave by his dhaniyamo.

### III

#### Marketing Organisation:

Among the various crops grown in the village paddy, nagali, val and tur pluses, kodra, til and sann were produced mostly for consumption in the village. On the other hand, sugarcane, suran, turmeric, ginger and bananas were commercial crops. Although the latter crops have been described as commercial crops, a small portion of them was, however, reserved for home consumption. Similarly, the surplus of paddy, tur and val pulses nagal, kodra and sann were sold off by the village cultivators. Grass grown on the dry-crop land was largely preserved by the cultivators for fodder for their cattle.

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5 (i) P.G.Shah supports this line of argument. See his The Dublas of Gujarat: (1958), Ch. XIII, p.176.

(ii) Also G.C.Mukhtyar quotes from Bombay Census Report of 1921 (Part I, P.223) that Halis have been described there as 'freemen, de jure, but serfs or slaves de facto'. Quotation from a foot note on p.170, Ch.X of G.C. Mukhtyar's Life and Labour in a South Gujarat Village.

The cultivators of Haria sold their surplus grain and gul prepared from sugarcane juice to some of the Chhipa wholesale grain merchants of Bulsar. Similarly, fruits and vegetables were sold to kachhia (vegetable and fruit merchants) of Bulsar. Sometimes some grain and vegetable brokers came to the village and directly contacted the cultivators for the sales at the harvest. In this method of sales, the brokers paid a lump sum to the cultivators after observing the harvest. At other times, the cultivators themselves carried by means of carts the surplus goods to Bulsar market for sales.

Bulsar was a big commercial centre for the Southern talukas of Surat district. It acted as the main collecting and distributing centre not only for gul but some other agricultural and forest products of the surrounding areas also. The Bulsar wholesale dealers in gul purchased gul from the local producers and then exported the same to different parts of North Gujarat and Saurashtra.<sup>6</sup>

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6 G.C.Mukhtyar writing about gul marketing in another village (e.g. Atgam) of Bulsar taluka also mentions this fact of large exports of gul from Bulsar to different parts of North Gujarat and Kathiawar. See his Life and Labour in a South Gujarat Village (1930), Ch.XI, P.189. Large parts of these exports of gul from Bulsar were carried out through small country boats sailing from the Bhagada port (which is a part of Bulsar town) upto the two nearer ports of Saurashtra viz: Bhavnagar and Ghogha.

The two nearer town markets of Bulsar and Pardi were commercially connected with Haria. Bulsar was joined with Haria by an all-weather approach road; but one could go to Pardi from Haria only by a foot-track. Although Pardi (about three-and-a-half miles on foot-track from Haria) was nearer than Bulsar (about seven miles on cart track), the Haria people maintained close business ties with Bulsar. The only reason for this was that Bulsar was both the Taluka Head Quarters and a bigger trading centre than Pardi-:

The Haria cultivators sold their surplus crop production in Bulsar market and from these they purchased most of their necessities such as juvar (staple food grain of all Anavils of South Gujarat), wheat, salt, spices, cloth and occasionally precious metals. Sometimes, few of them purchased some of their requirements from the Pardi market also. But this was rare and in a negligible proportional as compared to their purchases from Bulsar.

There was another type of marketing practice followed in the interior parts of this region also. It was by way of periodical moving markets held at the places of



pilgrimage and fairs, and regular weekly markets at some central places which were known as hatwaras. Some of the town merchants went there with small stocks of different cutlery goods, brass and copper utensils, sweets and other eatables, coarse varieties of cloth, etc. Mostly the tribal people and people of <sup>other</sup> low castes visited these markets and made their purchases. There were three such hatwaras in Bulsar taluka.

Another point which needs some emphasis here is that in most of the business transactions very little use of cash was done. As has been pointed out earlier, both the halis and the other servicing castes were largely paid in terms of grains. Some cash was, however, required by Haria cultivators for making purchases of their requirements from the town markets, for making revenue payments and for occasional small gifts and little cash payments to their halis.<sup>7</sup> The cash they needed for these three main purposes was secured by them from their sales of surplus crops to the town merchants. But they

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7 The author was informed that a medium-sized Anavil family of Haria needed on an average cash amount of Rs. 350/- to 400/- during one year for covering various cash payments.

found it most difficult to finance some unforeseen contingency such an accidental death of an ox in the midst of agricultural season. It was equally difficult for them to finance recurring social ceremonies such as a daughter's marriage and/or a parent's death, such expenditures were, however, met with by them by incurring debts. They used to borrow money from four Parsi moneylenders whose names have been mentioned in the landownership register of Haria dated 1901. The author does not possess further information about the extent of indebtedness of Haria cultivators in about 1901.

In its trade relations with nearer ports, the small port of Haria might have ~~been~~ also played some part. The author does not possess much information about it except the fact that a survey Number 372 of the village land is until now been recognised as Haria bandar (port). As a mark of this, there are still some wooden logs sunk deep into the mud on the bank of river Par. This port is not serviceable now. As during tidal periods, the river Par become navigable, it seems that small country boats might have linked Haria and its neighbouring villages with some of the nearer port-towns such as Bulsar and Umarsari; or there might have

been a ferry service in the river Par joining Haria with towns and villages on the opposite bank.

#### IV

#### The Village Political Organisation

##### The Dominant Caste:

As in the whole of South Gujarat, the Anavils formed the most powerful and influential caste-group in Haria. They owned over ninety per cent of land in the village. They were superior to all other caste groups from the point of view of social and ritual status also. From the point of view of numerical strength they were <sup>only</sup> next to the group of the tribal castes, viz: Dublas and Naikas. But because the Dublas and Naikas did not own any land and because they occupied a much lower position in the village hierarchy, they could not exert any influence in the village. In fact, they were so completely subordinated to their Anavil masters that their influence was practically nil in the village affairs. The Dheds, who formed the third major group in the village were, no doubt, able to accumulate some

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wealth by serving as butlers; they were also to some extent educated and westernised due to their close contact with the Europeans; but the bar of untouchability disqualified them to play any important role in the village affairs.

The other servicing caste-groups of the village were not only in a great minority but largely depended on the Anavil landowners, and they were lower to Anavils in social ritual and economic status. Therefore, they were also not influential in the village affairs.

The Headman:

There was a headman in the village called as Police Patel. He was nominated by the District Collector. His tenure of Office was of five years. Thus, unlike in some of the villages of other parts of Gujarat, the Police Patel's Office was not hereditary. As a village level Officer his main duties were: (i) to protect the village from decoits, etc.; (ii) to maintain peace and order in the village; (iii) to communicate to the Taluka office any event disturbing the peace and order in the village and to ask for immediate police aid from there if necessary; and to help the village accountant

in the work of collecting land revenue from the cultivators. For all this work he received from the Government (i.e. Taluka Office) a fixed amount of honorarium annually.

Unlike the villages in which the Police Patel's Office is hereditary, the position of the Police Patel in Haria was considered to be of little importance. There was hardly anytime a contest for that post in the village. There were instances in the past when in the absence of the readiness of any other person, the same Police Patel was re-appointed for five successive terms. The important point to be noted in this connection is that no Desai of Haria has ever become a Police Patel of the village for the simple reason that the Desais, whose ancestors were big district-level officers during the Mogul and Maratha rule in South Gujarat, would not show any inclination to become ordinary village level officers. The Bhathelas who became Police Patels of the village were also not too big landholders. This clearly shows that no great importance was attached to the post of Police Patel in Haria. He was an Officer, but not a very influential person, nor a leader in the village.

The Panch:

The real authority of village leadership was <sup>vested</sup> in the hands of an unofficial body called the Village panchayat, briefly, the panch. The panch consisted of four or five elderly Anavils, who were also big landlords, of the village. Except once (which was, I was informed, a coincidence), the Police Patel was never a member of the panch. Generally, two or three members of the panch were Desais and the other two Bhathelas. They acted as arbitrators in disputes regarding land and division of ancestral property among the brothers of a family; as a rule, their decision was held final. The village elders also acted as mediators in settling the betrothals of Anavil youths reaching marriageable age. In settling betrothals, the important function they performed was of deciding an agreeable amount of dowry and various items of paheramani to be given by the bride's father to the bridegroom and to the latter's kinsmen at the time of marriage. At times in a wedding that took place in the village, they persuaded the bridegroom's father, on behalf of the bride's father, to reduce as much as possible the amount of dowry and paheramani.

Nobody from the village approached the court of law at Bulsar or Surat for solving disputes. Mr. X was proud in saying that the word of the village elders who constituted the village Panch was never disobeyed by the village people, because the Panch was partial to none. Not only the Anavils, but the other caste-groups of Haria also approached this village Panch for the disputes arising <sup>among</sup> between them. But the disputes arising between members of one caste were dealt with the caste's respective caste panchs.

Apart from the general body of village panch, each individual caste-group in Haria was related with its respective caste-groups in the neighbouring village. These caste-groups had their own separate caste-panchayat. These bodies were also as influential as the village panchayat. The caste-panchayat inflicted severe punishment such as a fine or even excommunication upon any of the caste-member who disobeyed the traditional caste-rules. The people of Haria expressed vertical unity through the village panch and horizontal unity through their caste-panchs. The horizontal unity of the village caste-groups cut across the village boundaries.

General Conclusion about the traditional village:

Thus village Haria was a little community consisting of a small number of castes. One of them was a dominant caste. It was not numerically dominant, but it enjoyed the highest social, ritual and economic status in the village. The dominance of this caste was more felt in the village because it formed a part of that caste, e.g. ANAVIL, which was dominant in the whole region of South Gujarat.

This dominant caste patronised the other castes of the village. Various servicing castes and hali-labourers served them and in return received mostly grain wages.

It was this dominant caste, again, which wielded power in the village. The Dublas and Naikas, although numerically the strongest group in the village, were fully dependent upon the village landowners the Anavils, for their maintenance; the Dheds, who formed the third major group in the village, were prohibited from any kind of social intercourse with other caste groups of the village because they were by birth untouchables; and the other servicing castes were in a great minority.



It was in this type of social structure of the village that the Anavils enjoyed full dominance in the village community.

Moreover, the castes of the village community were arranged in a hierarchical order which was based upon their social and ritual status. The norms of social behaviour of every individual of this community were primarily based upon status considerations which were impressively reflected in intercaste relationships.

The internal organisation of different castes was quite strong. Although the membership of different caste-panchs spread over a number of surrounding villages, they were strong enough to enforce caste-codes upon their members. On the other hand, the village-panch (consisting of the members from the dominant caste) was equally influential in the management of different kinds of village affairs. The horizontal unity which obviously cut across the village boundaries did not, however, weaken the vertical unity which was reflected in the community life of the village.

The analysis of the social structure of the little village community of South Gujarat thus reveals that

status considerations determined social relationships in the traditional way of life.

On the side of the economic organisation of the village community, it is found that the common unit of a household in Haria was still a joint family and its chief source of income was land. Agriculture was the main basis of the village economic system. Not only that but the whole life of most of the people was attached to land. Production was largely meant for home consumption. Some surplus of it was, however, sold off in the town market. This sale enabled the village cultivators to earn some cash by which they made their normal and routine cash payments. Transactions within the village were largely carried out by means of a direct exchange of goods and services. Cash was thus rarely used.

Moreover, the social space in which the members of that village community lived was, considerably limited. Their marriage and hence kinship relationships were hardly extended beyond the boundaries of the Bulsar taluka. In connection with business transactions they maintained contact with the town market of Bulsar. Also

on account of the necessity for the services of some of the servicing castes which were not found in Haria, the village people had to depend on various neighbouring villages. In this way certain groups of surrounding villages maintained a network of service relationships. This was an essential characteristic of the social structure of an Indian village. Although the village community appeared to be a compact and self-reliant unit, it formed, in reality, an integral part of the much wider social, economic and political system of the region in which it was situated.